2: Adams E-4,5 (1970-1971) 1973 SR9 Carib SR9
(1932-1971) Barama River

II

HISTORY OF REGIONAL CONTACTS AND SUBSISTENCE RESOURCES

131 The headwaters of the Barama River are on the eastern slope of
133 the low divide which marks the Venezuelan frontier. The Barama River, fed by many tributaries, meanders through the rain forest in a generally easterly direction for about 100 miles until it flows into the Waini River. The Great Falls at Towakaima divides the Barama River drainage basin into an upper and a lower section. This report concerns the upper section. Figure 1 is a map of the Barama River in relation to the rest of Guyana. Figure 2 is a more detailed map of the Barama River area.

132 The physical environment of the Upper Barama area remains as
[114] Gillin describes it (1936:xii-xiii). Rainfall fluctuates from year to year, usually accumulating 110 to 120 inches annually (King 1968: 137 148). The drainage basin of the Upper Barama River supports a forest
[133] vegetation with a highest canopy of about 100 feet. The flora is mixed, and species occur in all possible combinations. The tall (35M) mora tree is perhaps the most impressive species (King 1968:22).

132 There is very little terrain that is not inundated by seasonal rain.
133 Bishop reports no high ground suitable for an air strip between Towakaima and the mouth of the Baramita tributary (1941:6).

133 From Baramita mouth to Towakaima, the basin is a wide, flat plain with a gentle gradient (Bishop 1941:8). The Baramita flows

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 1

824 direct plant-to-plant cycling characteristic of the rain forest
241 floral community, energy is diverted for human consumption. The diverse floral species are replaced with species selected to yield food sources. Fields are prepared and maintained in keeping with this use.

242 The soil is selected with regard to its role as a support for the
241 plants. A preferred site is a hillside. The gradient allows for drainage. Also, a mixture of sand and clay will deter the water retention which would rot root crops in predominantly clayey soil. The clay component of this mixed soil protects the seeds and young plants from the full impact of heat from direct sunlight. Only a small field, about one acre, is usually cut at one time. Field shapes tend to be circular. Tall trees are left on the periphery to allow partial shade on the seeds and young plants.

241 The cutting is done to allow burning just before the rainy
[221] seasons that occur from November to January and from May to July.
[132] Planting follows burning. Previously, fire and stone-edged imple-
241 ments alone were used. However, iron-edged tools are now common in
412 the Upper Barama area. Digging sticks for planting seeds remain in
[372] use.
*[177]

241 The different cultigens are intermingled, making use of micro-environmental conditions. For example, sugar cane plants may be located to take advantage of a few square feet along a creek bed. Pineapples may be placed in an ash line. Young tobacco plants may be located to be partially shaded by a stump until mature enough to tolerate the sun.